

Mothers and Us

If I had to name one person who had the most influence on the person I grew up to be, it would be my mother. Many others, including my father, were and are still great formers of my personality and aims as well.

First, I was born. God formed me, and I came into being. Biology is the beginning of motherhood. Sometimes it stops there. But sometimes, with God's influence, it is only the beginning of great things.

Ps. 139:19: You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb

So Sarah Godwin Lee, my mother, not the Sara Lee of dessertcake fame, is my mother, and for that I am very glad. Not just because I was born, but because she made sure to take me to church, to pray for me my entire life, and to encourage me to grow up to be a person who has the best interests of others at heart.

Abraham Lincoln was about my height and weight. This president of the United States during the Civil War knew where he came from, and said it more than once. "All that I am," he writes, "or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

I agree. A steady and giving influence is what people lack all too often in today's society. A role model of putting others first, of what a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ can do in your heart of hearts, and a continual dream of the best that could be for you, that's who my mom is.

George Washington parses my thoughts exactly. "My mother," he says, "was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her."

As she, my father, and others introduced me to the church, I began to see the connection between earth and heaven. As I lay on the church pew at 4 or 5 years old, listening sometimes to the preacher at the front of First Baptist Church, my head was in her lap. As I began to see how God had a plan for me at Kentyre Presbyterian Church, she made sure I was there. And when God called me into the ministry at college, she was the first one I rang up. "The love of a mother," writes Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "is the veil of a softer light between the heart and the heavenly Father."

The food I put on the table and in my mouth today has its beginnings in the food we shared together at home during childhood. From orange juice in those little tiny cans to fried chicken, from Salisbury steak to strawberries, from tomatoes to cucumbers, they were all prepared for the first time by her loving hands for me, my father, and my sister and brothers.

Mitch Albom says, "I don't know what it is about food your mother makes for you, especially when it's something that anyone can make - pancakes, meat loaf, tuna salad - but it carries a certain taste of memory."

It's like the food at a covered-dish dinner at church. Someone made it for you with love, and with love it always tastes better. Love is the best seasoning in any meal.

She was and is a true friend. In tough times she was a rock of hope and perspective. In wonderful times she was there with an encouraging smile, and a "there is no limit" message.

A mother is the truest friend we have, when trials heavy and sudden fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends desert us; when trouble thickens around us, still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts." ~Washington Irving

Chances are that the person you are, dear reader, is because of your mother, your father, or some other person who fulfilled those roles in their highest sense. The stories we tell and the way we tell a story. The way we walk and the way we look are in our genes. Our heritage came from family of generations back, and our ancestors have many stories to tell through us.

"There's a story behind everything," writes Mitch Albom". How a picture got on a wall. How a scar got on your face. Sometimes the stories are simple, and sometimes they are hard and heartbreaking. But behind all your stories is always your mother's story, because hers is where yours begin."

Mary the mother of Jesus I am sure had great plans for her son. But she stood there at the foot of the cross knowing that God's plans were greater than her own. There is a time when we become the ones who take care of our mothers, if we are granted that privilege by long life and the grace of heaven.

“It is a fundamental truth,” Ezra Taft Benson puts forth, “that the responsibilities of motherhood cannot be successfully delegated. No, not to day-care centers, not to schools, not to nurseries, not to babysitters. It is mother’s influence during the crucial formative years that forms a child’s basic character. Home is the place where a child learns faith, feels love, and thereby learns from mother’s loving example to choose righteousness. How vital are mother’s influence and teaching in the home—and how apparent when neglected!”

So I give thanks for home, for my mom and her supporting cast who made it a place of love. And I will always be thankful for her quick smile, for her deep faith, for the ability to sing and write and speak and encourage, for these things are what she gave to me. Happy Mother’s day to all, and to all a good night!